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TORNADO RECOVERY REQUIRES WHOLE COMMUNITY EFFORT

RALEIGH, N.C. – One month of intense recovery efforts have helped thousands of survivors begin to heal and rebuild after severe storms, rain and 28 tornadoes swept across a third of North Carolina on April 16.

Just three days after the storms, Gov. Perdue requested and received a presidential disaster declaration for North Carolina, making federal financial assistance available to help individuals and communities.

In the past month, more than 8,000 people have registered with the Federal Emergency Management Agency for disaster assistance. Federal and state disaster recovery grants and loans have now passed the \$9 million mark.

Yet continued work by the whole community is needed to complete disaster recovery in the impacted counties, state and federal emergency management officials said today.

“This has not been just one disaster,” said N.C. Director of Emergency Management Doug Hoell. “Looking at the registration figures, it was actually 8,000 individual disasters for those affected. Recovering from that many personal crisis events takes a well-coordinated approach by the entire community.”

Immediately after the storm, local first responders and voluntary organizations rescued the injured, cleared debris and provided food, shelter, clothing for displaced survivors, Hoell said. “Utility companies from a wide area labored to restore power, water and communications, for which we are very thankful.”

Days after the disaster declaration, FEMA and NCEM opened a joint field office and 16 disaster recovery centers. Jointly, federal and state partners sent Community Relations specialists out into neighborhoods to help people understand what help may be available to them.

Cleanup and rebuilding work is progressing well, but much remains to be done.

“We believe that many people affected by the April 16 storms have not yet registered with FEMA,” said Federal Coordinating Officer Michael Bolch.

The June 20 deadline is approaching for FEMA registration and U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) disaster loan applications.

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“If you get an SBA loan application after you have registered with FEMA, be sure to complete it and return it to SBA. If you don’t, all assistance stops,” Bolch said.

The whole community of government, businesses, civic and voluntary groups, religious congregations and the media all play a role in making sure people affected by this disaster get the information and assistance they need to recover.

State and FEMA officials say that the response to the devastating storms depended from the start on voluntary organizations and workers.

“Volunteers were key to emergency response measures, debris removal, shelter, food and water, clothing and comfort immediately after the storms,” said George Strunk, President of North Carolina Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster.

Assistance came from civic, charitable and faith-based organizations such as The American Red Cross, Catholic Social Services, Centro Internacional de Raleigh, Christian Adventist Community Service, Christian Reform World Relief Committee, Episcopal Relief and Development, ICNA Relief USA, Mennonite Disaster Service, MERCI/ UMCOR of the United Methodist Church, Nazarene Church Disaster Response, North Carolina Baptist Men, North Carolina Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Samaritan’s Purse and The Salvation Army.

“After these visiting helpers return home or move on to other disasters,” said Strunk, “it is the local agencies and volunteers who must handle the tasks of long term restoration and rebuilding.

“Here’s what everyone can do today,” Hoell said. “First, help yourself. Register with FEMA, ask about applying for an SBA loan, and stay in touch to get answers. Next, help others. Assist a neighbor, call family to see what they need, encourage someone to do their paperwork, donate to non-profit organizations whose resources are strained, and join community efforts to get prepared for future emergencies.”

“Every family, business and agency should create emergency response plans, acquire needed supplies and equipment, and practice their emergency response plan regularly. The whole community needs to be prepared,” Hoell concluded.

For more information about this disaster, go to www.nccrimecontrol.org and click on the red “April Tornadoes” tab. More information is also available at www.fema.gov.

FEMA’s temporary housing assistance and grants for public transportation expenses, medical and dental expenses, and funeral and burial expenses do not require individuals to apply for an SBA loan. However, applicants who receive SBA loan applications must submit them to SBA loan officers to be eligible for assistance that covers personal property, vehicle repair or replacement, and moving and storage expenses.

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